New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1944

Volume V, Number 11. • *Yearly Subscription $15.00* • Week of May 22, 1944

1944 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years

Original Reviews Appeared in These Volumes

1943 Vol.

STAGE PLAY	PAGES
Another Love Story	260, 261, 262
*Carmen Jones	207, 208, 209
Connecticut Yankee (A)	219, 220, 221, 222
Doctors Disagree	186, 187, 188
Early to Bed	314, 315, 316
Harriet	364, 365, 366
*Kiss and Tell	356, 357, 358
Listen, Professor	190, 191, 192
Lovers and Friends	210, 211, 212
Merry Widow (The)	301, 302, 303
*Oklahoma	341, 342, 343
*One Touch of Venus	264, 265, 266
*Othello	256, 257, 258
Outrageous Fortune	237, 238, 239
Something for the Boys	398, 399, 400
South Pacific	184, 185, 186
*Three's a Family	328, 329, 330
*Tomorrow the World	334, 335, 336
*Two Mrs. Carrolls (The)	304, 305, 306
Victory Belles	244, 245, 246
*Voice of the Turtle (The)	199, 200, 201, 202
What's Up	229, 230, 231
Winged Victory	216, 217, 218, 219
*Ziegfeld Follies	338, 339, 340

1942 Vol.

*Doughgirls (The)	124, 125, 126
Janie	244, 245, 246
Rosalinda	187, 188, 189

1941 Vol.

*Angel Street	182, 183, 184, 185
*Arsenic and Old Lace	417, 418, 419, 420

1940 Vol.

*Life With Father	457, 458, 459

*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of May 22, 1944.

1944 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1944

Reviews Appear in This Volume

STAGE PLAY	PAGE
Allah Be Praised	207
Bright Boy	249
But Not Goodbye	220
Cherry Orchard (The)	276
*Chicken Every Sunday	232
*Decision	265
*Dream With Music	188
Duke in Darkness (The)	279
*Follow the Girls	222
*Helen Goes to Troy	201
Hickory Stick	190
Highland Fling (A)	198
House in Paris (The)	241
Jackpot	284
*Jacobowsky and the Colonel	243
*Mexican Hayride	271
Mrs. January and Mr. Ex	235
Mrs. Kimball Presents	254
Only the Heart	230
*Over Twenty-One	297
Peepshow	263
*Pick-Up Girl	196
Pretty Little Parlor	212
Public Relations	228
*Ramshackle Inn	295
Right Next to Broadway	256
*Searching Wind (The)	217
Sheppey	209
Storm Operation	289
Suds in Your Eye	287
Take It As It Comes	261
Thank You, Svoboda	251
*Wallflower	274

*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of May 22, 1944.

THEATRE OPENINGS

"Hickory Stick"

"Dream With Music"

Complete reviews appear in this issue with a summary on the back page

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS : : : 235 EAST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

"Dream With Music"

A musical fantasy; book by Sidney Sheldon, Dorothy Kilgallen and Ben Roberts; music by Clay Warnick and lyrics by Edward Eager; choreography by George Balanchine; settings by Stewart Chaney. Staged by Richard Kollmar and presented by Mr. Kollmar at the Majestic Theatre, May 18, 1944.

NEW YORK TIMES
May 19, 1944

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"Dream With Music"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

IT is obvious that when Richard Kollmar decides to put on a show, he does so with an open checkbook and a liberal pen. His "Dream With Music," which came last evening to the Majestic, has settings and costumes which must have cost a fortune—and look like it. As a display of colors and an exhibit of stage design, Broadway's latest musical ranks very high on the records. Unfortunately, however, musicals like everything else must have something to put before the settings, and in this the show has been more than lax. To be brief about it, "Dream With Music" is pretty dull, lacking humor and wit and sprightliness. It does not live up to its wrappings.

* * *

As has been the case in a good many musicals this season, the book acts as a dead weight on the proceedings. It is a lifeless story built around a fairly good idea—a haggard writer of soap operas, bedeviled by the work of turning out a story a day, dream of Schéhérazade, spinning out tales for a thousand and one nights. The authors of "Dream With Music" are not up to Schéhérazade's style, however, allowing their characters to become talky, and they put modern gags into a fantasy which could do better without them. The conversation at the Majestic is too often sleep-provoking to belong in any Forty-fourth Street playhouse.

Also, the music is not particularly exciting. It is based, as the program quite frankly notes, on themes found in Rimsky-Korsakoff, Schubert, Beethoven, Grieg and others, with Clay Warnick making the adaptations. That idea is good in theory, also, but it doesn't quite work out in practice. Only one song—that called "Love at Second Sight"—emerges in a whistling state, and that is somewhat under par for the musical comedy course. To give the music every chance, Mr. Kollmar has a large orchestra in the pit, but even then the result, as in the case of the dialogue, is not sparkling.

Vera Zorina is the soap-opera writer turned Schéhérazade, a role that is a little like that of Gertrude Lawrence in "Lady in the Dark." Miss Zorina naturally is at her best during the ballets and not at her best as an actress; she lacks the force Miss Lawrence put into the earlier show. Ronald Graham is the hero, eventually to become Aladdin, and Robert Brink ends up as the Sultan. Joy Hodges is on hand to sing some of the songs, as is Betty Allen, and Leonard Elliott is the chief comedian—with a style you either like or do not like. A large chorus is pretty, another estimable habit of Mr. Kollmar's.

But such credits as "Dream With Music" unblushingly may put into the records are gained mainly by Stewart Chaney, who designed the settings, and Miles White, the costume creator. Mr. Chaney's effects are spectacular, including an actual flying carpet, and backgrounds which seem to stretch out of the theatre. Mr. White has mixed all the primary and secondary colors and then has added some of his own. George Balanchine's dances probably are not those by which he will be longest remembered. One attractive song-and-dance number involving the animal kingdom gets partially ruined by conversation and bad gags. It would have made a nice ballet.

Practically everything that could go wrong backstage did so last evening. Even making due allowances, "Dream With Music" is what it should not be—pretty much of a disappointment.

THE CAST

Ella	Betty Allen
Marian	Joy Hodges
Dinah	Vera Zorina
Western Union Boy	Alex Rotov
Michael	Ronald Graham
Robert	Robert Brink
Sand Diviner	Ralph Bunker
Sinbad	Leonard Elliott
Genie	Dave Ballard
The Twins	Lois and Lucille Barnes
Day	Peter Birch
Night	Sunny Rice
Mouse	Buddy Douglas
Chinese Masseur	Jerry Ross

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
May 19, 1944

'Dream With Music' Stars Vera Zorina

By ROBERT GARLAND

IT seems to me that incoming musicals grow more and more elaborate. Take "Dream With Music," which came last night into 44th St. So fancy are its fixings—settings by Stewart Chaney; costumes by Miles White; choreography by George Balanchine; caryatids by Mother Nature—that house electricians at the Majestic blew out the theatre's master fuse in an effort to display everything to the best advantage.

In a production as elaborate as "Dream With Music" there's a powerful lot of lighting to be turned off and on. Mostly on. There's a magic carpet and a rubber moon. A Manhattan apartment and a bazaar in Bagdad. A Mr. and Mrs. Blue-Eyed Panda and a Mr. and Mrs. I. J. Fox. A toy Leaning Tower of Pisa and a genie who is bigger than all get-out. And half a dozen human caryatids from Harlem, holding up a goodly part of Mr. Chaney's scenery.

Headdress by Lily Dache. Crocheted tights by Karinska. Cigarette box by Georg Jensen. Aladdin's Lamp by Cartier. Perfume by Caron. Typewriter by Underwood. Radio by General Electric. Nail polish by Revlon. Hairdos by Charles of the Ritz. Furniture by the Flea Mart. Moons by Czecho-Peasant Art Co. Flowers by Universal. Feathers by Stittenberg . . . What conscientious fuse wouldn't blow itself out over the responsibility of lighting a "Dream With Music"?

Lady in a Dream

As was the case in "Lady in the Dark," "Dream With Music" sets out to tell the story of a hard-working girl whose job gets on her nerves and under her skin, driving her nearly frantic. While the lady in "Lady in the Dark" was a voguish magazine editor, the lady in "Dream With Music" is a writer of those everlasting radio serials known to the trade as "soap operas." At the Majestic Dinah can no longer take it. Written out, she is pretty generally disturbed about it.

So, where Gertrude Lawrence's Liza went to a psychoanalyst, Vera Zorina's Dinah goes to sleep and dreams of Scheherazade, that delectable Oriental female who never got tired of story-telling. The Soap Opera Lady's dream takes up the entire evening, and includes Aladdin, with his lamp from Cartier; Sinbad, with Mrs. Sinbad; a Sultan and a Waxier; a Snake Charmer and a Fakir, not to mention Mispah, Hispah, Rispah, Tispah, Fispah and Kispah, undressy babies about Bagdad.

It's "The Arabian Nights" all over again, streamlined, jazzed up, kidded down, not always as diverting as it sounds on paper. But, in its two acts, 14 scenes, 20 musical numbers, it does manage to be colorful, extravagant and expansive. It is also too long. Last night, after a Boston tryout, "Dream With Music" ran until almost midnight. What Richard Kollmar, the producer, could make use of is a couple of good clean jokes, a big, blue pencil, and a song to whistle as you leave the theatre.

An Eyeful

Programs at the Majestic are disarmingly aboveboard about the music. This music, these programs say, is based on themes from Saint-Saens, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Schubert, Beethoven, Weber, Grieg, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Wagner, Chopin, Gluck, Schumann, Dvorak, Haydn and, of course, Tschaikowsky, with an unacknowledged tune from the Rodgers and Hart top drawer. Reorchestrated by Russell Bennett and the lesser likes of him, Max Meth conducts them meticulously.

* * *

Now, instead of "Scheherazade" and Schubert's "Ninth," "Oberon" and Beethoven's "Seventh," the "Ride of the Valkyries" and Schumann's "Piano Concerto," you have "Be Glad You're Alive" and "I'm Afraid I'm in Love," "Baby Don't Count on Me" and "Give, Sinbad, Give," "Love at Second Sight" and "Mouse Meets Girl," "I'll Take the Solo" and "Mr. and Mrs. Wrong." Unfortunately, nobody's on hand to sing them as they should be sung. So it's up to Vera Zorina to dance them.

As the star, Miss Zorina does justice to "Scheherazade's Dance," "Relax and Enjoy It," "Ballet in the Clouds," "Mouse Meets Girl" and "Woman Against the World." But when talking and singing her accent continues to be disturbing. As I once told Irene Bordoni, if she remains in America much longer, she'll not be able to speak English at all. The others in a long, long cast are more numerous than distinguished . . . At any rate, there's something for everybody in "Dream With Music." And to look at it, it certainly is a fuse-blower.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
May 19, 1944

Very Pretty, But Awful Dull

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

THE season has produced no musical comedy prettier to look at than *Dream With Music*. Stewart Chaney with his sets and Miles White with his costumes have dressed up this Arabian Nights fantasy to the utmost, making the stage a playground of charming color and design. Furthermore, they have avoided mere Oriental gaudiness, bringing to their work a certain lightness and sense of style. This lightness and sense of style are also achieved at times—though not often enough—by George Balanchine in his dances, so that visually *Dream With Music* has much to recommend it.

The pity is that the show itself doesn't live up to its good looks, or achieve any lightness or buoyancy on its own. It is, indeed, like one of those hothouse peaches that are as flavorless as they are pretty. For one thing, it is plagued by the same shortcomings that have attended most of the musicals this season—unrewarding music and a tiresome book. I persist in the quaint belief that these items still count, and count heavily; and I nurse the hope that next season those in charge will agree with me. In any case, *Dream With Music* is never much fun.

In the story Zorina, at the end of her rope writing a soap-opera serial, falls asleep and dreams she is Scheherazade at the end of her rope telling stories to the Sultan. The dream carries her through Bagdad palaces and bazaars, into the air on a magic carpet, and through strange forests and game preserves. The conception of the fantasy, which at moments rather suggests *Lady in the Dark*, is fairly imaginative for musical comedy; it's the execution that consistently falls short. The

dialogue has little life to it, and less humor; and far too many of the situations are alike. The liveliest scene is in the game preserve, where the frisking animals first dance sedately to Gluck ballet music and then suddenly swing it. The production, incidentally, uses snatches and themes from a great many musical classics, but they do not compensate for the lack of a good original score. There are two or three agreeable songs in *Dream With Music*, but no outstanding one.

And there is a pleasant cast. Zorina, ever her fragile, floating self, dances well. Ronald Graham and Joy Hodges sing nicely; and the chorus is good-looking.

But it's not enough. The show suffered Thursday night from serious lighting and scene-shifting trouble, for which due allowances should be made. But the real trouble is that *Dream With Music* lacks life and go.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
May 19, 1944

Dream with Music Fails To Live Up to Its Promise

By BURTON RASCOE

IT is enough to make the judicious weep—all the money, time and energy that have gone into the production of Dream with Music which opened at the Majestic last night. For there is little taste or talent in the book, the music, the lyrics, or the direction.

Stewart Chaney, the designer of the sets, and Miles White, the designer of the costumes, have made lavish and expensive use of fabrics and color to provide one of the most beautiful visual backgrounds seen on the stage in recent years. And there is nothing to go with the spectacle except some hard-working but not outstanding performers, who are whipped with songs without melody and by dialogue that is feeble and banal when it is not befouled with guttersnipe jokes.

In the pit there is one of the best orchestras in the country, and most of what they have to play sounds as if it were written in the Chinese five-tone scale, noisy and cacophonous.

For the first time in my life I wished the composer of a musical score had been an arrant, shameless and clever purloiner of other men's work. The trouble with the music of this "musical fantasy," I fear, is that it is mostly original with Clay Warnick, his very own.

Promises Not Kept

Throughout the show there are promises which peter out. A song will start out all right and then go haywire; a choreographical bit by Balanchine will begin as something inspiring and original and will degenerate into patterned insipidity; a comic situation will be created and nothing comical done about it; a beautiful scene, like that one in which Zorina and Aladdin (Mr. Graham) are aloft on the magic carpet and in which Zorina, stepping off the carpet in midair to get the moon for Aladdin, is wafted down to earth, will bring you to the edge of your seat with expectation, and then it will be spoiled by some cheap banality. My heart stood still with pleasurable anticipation when I heard familiar lines of Alfred Kreymborg's lovely poem, Earth Wisdom, used as an invocation to the moon; but instead of going on with the invocation as Mr. Kreymborg wrote it, and perhaps using Mr. Kreymborg's composition for the mandolute to accompany it, the thing went off into silly, prosy ineptitudes.

Plot of Story

The dream book, which took three people to write, is the work of Sidney Shelton, Dorothy Kilgallen and Ben Roberts. It is about a lady writer of soap operas who is engaged to an advertising man who handles her sponsor's account but is in love with a newspaper correspondent who is in love only with footloose adventure. The newsman goes off to China to cover the wars, and the authoress, worn to a frazzle trying to think up new tragedies to get her soap opera characters into, falls asleep and dreams she is Scheherazade, condemned to tell a new Arabian tale every night for a thousand nights. The body of the musical has to do with her experiences in her dream.

Some individual performers are to be commended for valiant services in hopeless tasks, such as the lovely Zorina, who is at her most graceful and sylphlike best in uninspired ballet numbers; to cute and pretty Betty Allen for some bright bits; to Peter Birch and Alex Rotov in a tapballet number that enlivened a dull first act, and to the tap specialists under the direction of Henry Le Tang, and, of course, to Buddy Douglas.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
May 19, 1944

Nightmare With Music

By HOWARD BARNES

FANCY trimmings are a useful adjunct to a theatrical extravaganza. There are lots of them in "Dream With Music" which lurched into the Majestic Theater last evening. Magic carpets vie with dangling moons; cloud scenes with furs by I. J. Fox. The new Majestic Theater offering is an elegant and vulgar show, exhibiting a price mark on almost every bit of scenic invention, and very little else indeed. Vera Zorina is on hand to sing and dance, but she is considerably baffled by a cock-eyed continuity. Ronald Graham, Joy Hodges and the other participants in the show rush around rather frenetically, but they add little fun, fantasy or musical eloquence to what is called a "musical fantasy."

* * *

So far as this bewildered reviewer could determine, the Sidney Sheldon-Dorothy Kilgallen-Ben Roberts book has attempted to hook up "Lady in the Dark" with the Scheherezade legend. In any case, Zorina appears first as an overworked radio script writer who is all set for a laughing academy, dreams her way into the world of Aladdin and Sinbad and gets tangled up on the way with a menagerie of the fabled Indies, which boasts an I. J., a couple of blue-eyed pandas, a penguin and a mouse. If this brief synopsis of the plot of "Dream With Music" seems a bit fey, blame it on the production and the fact that it was still going strong well after normal theater closing time and a dead-line had to be met.

* * *

The book of a musical fantasy, even when it has neither coherence nor wit, is generally far less important than the score. Unfortunately, the songs in this Richard Kollmar offering, whether frankly interpolated from the classics, or passably contemporary, are extraordinarily ill-suited to a fantasy. The musical rhythms are jerky and monotonous and the lyrics which accompany them are merely dull. George Balanchine has created a few dance routines which are probably deserving of notice and Sunny Rice goes it alone in a moderately effective tap number, but most of the terpsichore is as outlandish as the book and score.

* * *

It is a pity, for example, to find Zorina swinging around on a wire when one might wish to see her trip a bit of distinctive light fantastic. She rarely has a chance to do her stuff. Ronald Graham, as her true love, who appears in the dream sequence as Aladdin, clomps around in oversized wedgies while Miss Hodges is generally buried in a group of not too seductively undressed chorines. Stewart Chaney's settings and the Miles White costumes are as fancy as the whole physical production. "Dream With Music" has plenty of pretentious embellishments. It could have stood a couple of good songs and a bit of comic nonsense.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
May 19, 1944

'Dream With Music' an Immense, Beautiful Ultra-Expensive Bore

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THE only way to improve "Dream With Music" would be to put it on in two or three sections, so a customer could take two or three nights for sleeping through it and perhaps gain more refreshment. Even this, I am afraid, would not save the show. Not since Earl Carroll tapped a cash-happy angel, looted several dry goods emporiums and put on "Fioretta" has so elaborate a load been dumped on a stage.

By now producer Richard Kollmar must realize that money isn't everything and good intentions are not enough in show business. He gave his musical comedy everything—everything but spirit. As it unfolded, unrolled and even slid upon the stage of the Majestic last night, its splendors were vast. But its torpor was vaster.

Stewart Chaney, a master designer, has dreamed with a sketchbook and paint brush and come up with ten or a dozen sets which range from palaces to enchanted forests, from Bagdad bazaars to the Magic Carpet itself. Miles White has filled them with exotic costumes.

Best in Orchestrations

The song writers, Edward Eager and Clay Warnick, have written twenty numbers, or reprises of same, but I can remember only one—an amusing quintet called "Relax and Enjoy It." These numbers, played by an excellent and oversize orchestra conducted by the able Max Meth, have been orchestrated by Russell Bennett, Hans Spialek, Ted Royal and Mr. Warnick, and their arrangements are really splendid. The tunes are all dressed up—but they don't go any place and almost every one is too long.

The cast is large enough to staff the Pentagon Building with pretty usherettes and the principals are entirely amiable and attractive. Vera Zorina dances, Ronald Graham sings, Joy Hodges looks more like Myrna Loy than Miss Loy does, and a tall near-newcomer named Robert Brink displays not only an excellent voice but also a sense of comedy.

Hidden in the folds and swirls of "Dream With Music" is a good musical show idea—the story of a lady writer of soap operas who is weary of grinding out the daily chapters. Exhausted, she falls asleep and dreams; dreams that she is Scheherezade, who has to tell a new yarn every night to keep the Sultan from having her beheaded.

There were 1,001 instalments in the original Arabian Nights. At the Majestic it only seems longer. Credit for the book is shared by Sidney Sheldon, Ben Roberts and Dorothy Kilgallen—who, besides being Mrs. Kollmar, is a glamor girl of the newspaper business and the Broadway columnist of the Journal-American.

Main Ingredient Lacking

There are beautiful things and amusing things in this show, but the amusements are less frequent. When Aladdin rubs his lamp and an immense genie appears, some one with wit has had the orchestra play a snatch of "Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair"—a good musical pun. Mr. Chaney's sets float or travel upon a moving floor, and show imagination and good taste. Costumes for a congress of animals in Aladdin's Game Preserve are remarkable. Dances designed by Georges Balanchine are disappointing.

Sets, actors, musicians, orchestrations, lyrics and even ideas can be bought; but the thing that makes a show—spirit—can't be measured, weighed or hauled. You just have to pray for it, and it is just as likely to turn up in something that didn't cost peanuts. All of last night's audience were praying for it but it passed us by.

THE NEW YORK SUN
May 19, 1944

'Dream With Music,' Musical Fantasy, with Vera Zorina, Has Premiere at Majestic.

By HERRICK BROWN

VERA ZORINA came dancing gracefully back into town last evening as Richard Kollmar's new musical comedy production "Dream With Music" had its premiere at the Majestic Theater, and her return is most welcome. She has lost none of her charm either as a dancer or a player and by her performance she lends distinction to the waning season.

She lends distinction also to a production that is lavish and eye-filling and beautiful, but all too often ponderous. To get its major faults out of the way quickly "Dream With Music" has serious book trouble. Also it could do with considerable more hilarity. The story which Sidney Sheldon, Dorothy Kilgallen (Mrs. Kollmar) and Ben Roberts have concocted about a brain-weary writer of radio soap operas who falls asleep while trying to think up a new installment of an air waves serial and dreams she is Scheherazade out of the "Arabian Nights" is in itself a good enough idea with which to launch a musical comedy. As things worked out at the Majestic last evening, however, the plot proved definitely heavy-handed in its unfolding, and in the lengthy first act particularly, it kept getting most annoyingly in the way of the songs and the dancing and the ballet. By the second act, it had faded into the background and things went better.

The dream theme which takes up most of the performance lends itself admirably to colorful and imaginative dances and scenes, and the authors and the producer take advantage of this to provide some excellent numbers. The ballet in the clouds which climaxes the opening act is lovely to watch and the party of the beasts and birds in Aladdin's game preserve in the second act is a distinct treat, not only a delight to the eye but lightly humorous. On the credit side too is Clay Warnick's score, which is constantly tuneful. Two of the numbers, at least, "Love at Second Sight" and "Be Glad You're Alive," are going to be heard often around town.

It is to Miss Zorina, of course, that the role of Dinah, the script writer, falls, and she proves herself an excellent actress as well as a lovely dancer. Her duet, "Mouse Meets Girl," with Buddy Douglas, a most enchanting mouse, in the animals' party scene, is one of the high spots of the evening and, although double entendre patter songs, in which Lyricist Edward Eager seems to delight, are not exactly her style she does all right, too, with "Women Against the World." The two catchiest songs in the show are given to Joy Hodges and she makes the most of them. Her role, that of the script writer's secretary, does not fare too well in the book, however, and for the most part her talents are wasted.

Ronald Graham as a foot-loose newspaper correspondent, who, in the dream, becomes Aladdin, both sings and acts well, but Robert Brink, who plays Dinah's fiance, has a bad time of it both as a pompous advertising executive and as the Sultan in the dream scenes. Despite a good voice his singing, too, seems more suited to the concert than the musical comedy stage. Leonard Elliott of night club fame doesn't get much help from the authors in the role of Sinbad the Sailor, but when he resorts to specialty tactics, particularly when he is lecturing on the ballet, he is amusing. Betty Allen proves a boisterous team mate in several of his songs. The cast boasts a flock of top-notch tap dancers, with the nimble-toed Sunny Rice heading the list.

Stewart Chaney's settings are lovely throughout and the costumes by Miles White and the choreography of George Balanchine add to the evening's pleasure.

The best in "Dream With Music" is very good indeed, but its flaws keep it from ever adding up to much more than an extremely gorgeous spectacle.

NEW YORK POST
May 19, 1944

'Dream With Music' An Elaborate But Undistinguished Extravaganza

By WILELLA WALDORF

"DREAM WITH MUSIC," the opulent extravaganza produced by Richard Kollmar last night at the Majestic Theatre, advances the sensational idea that a young woman who writes "soap operas" for the radio day in and day out is not unlike Scheherazade of Arabian Nights fame. Both lead a somewhat bizarre and extremely jittery existence on the installment plan.

Having evolved this striking parallel, the authors of "Dream With Music" were apparently so completely exhausted by the mental effort that they were unable to contribute much of anything else. After arranging that the heroine, a "soap opera" writer, should fall asleep and dream she was actually Scheherezade, they likewise dozed off and called in a brigade of designers and technicians.

The designers and technicians have had themselves a time to the tune of something approaching $175,000. It's a trifle difficult to imagine Vera Zorina as a composer of radio serials for the washing powder trade, but she makes a fetching Scheherazade, riding with Aladdin on his Magic Carpet, hailing out to dance on a cloud and hunt for the moon, visiting the animals in an enchanted forest, and generally behaving like the heroine of a children's fairy story staged with all the pomp and naivete of one of the old Hippodrome super-spectacles.

Jerky Stage Magic

Back in the days before movies were invented, the stage used to do this sort of thing with touching regularity. Nowadays, since the films handle magic so much more effectively, it is seldom that we see anything quite like this. If the magic stunts and the animal acts and the fairy tale spinning were all of "Dream With Music" we might be inclined to say well, after all, it's colorful and pretty and beauteous Zorina is always a fascinating creature. Take the kiddies.

But unfortunately the spectacle is not all. Every now and then the authors, sleeping but fitfully, awoke from their slumbers and contributed intensely dull driblets of routine musical comedy chatter interspersed with songs which sounded so much alike, and were equipped with such uninspired lyrics, that they quickly removed any charm generated by the efforts of the designers and stunt men.

The Children's Hour

It must be admitted it is no great treat these days to watch Aladdin summon a Genie and have him arrive in a puff of smoke and a series of jerks via trapdoor, nor is it precisely thrilling to see oZrina bobbing around on a wire after taking off from the Flying Carpet in search of the moon. Stage magic, unless it is performed by Dante, is apt to be distressingly obvious to anyone over the age of six.

Nevertheless, we should have been quite willing to become a child again last night and even coo happily as the chorus girls dressed as owls and lions and wolves and lambs were it not for the fact that the regulation musical comedy part of "Dream With Music" left us too stupefied to drop a jaw over the magnificence of Miles White's costumes and Stewart Chaney's scenic effects, including the Flying Carpet. They were eye-filling, of course, but the words and music invariably brought us down to earth with a bang. It was difficult to tell one song from another except when the composer was tossing in bits of Scheherazade," a dash of "Die Walkuere" or a soupcon of "Peer Gynt." As for the jokes . . . Banish them, Aladdin!

Vera Zorina remains one of our favorite entertainers. . . . She has grace, charm, sparkle, a fascinating personality, a fetching accent, humor and a distinguished quality that is very rare in the theatre. It is heartrending to see her wasted on anything as basically undistinguished as "Dream With Music."

Since the plot, such as it was, had to do with the radio, a great deal of advertising was in evidence last night. At one point in the proceedings a couple of scantily garbed females paraded around Bagdad carrying large boxes of a well-known soap powder conspicuously labeled. We trust the revenue from such subtle promotion pays for a hefty slice of the show, which must have cost a mint.

"Hickory Stick"

Play by Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett; staged by J. B. Daniels; settings by Frederick Fox. Presented by Marjorie Ewing and Marie Louise Elkins at the Mansfield Theatre, May 8, 1944.

THE CAST

Mary Donlan	Sara Floyd
Miss Jastrombowski	Wanda Sponder
Peter Jastrombowski	Bill Hunt
Eugene Walsh	Lawrence Fletcher
Rita Pessolano	Adrienne Bayan
John Maclemore	Jeff Brown
Tony Pessolano	Vito Christi
Mrs. Bettina Pessolano	Frieda Altman
Karen Lorimer	Adrienne Marden
Patrick Maclemore Sr.	Farrell Pelly
James Kirkland	Steve Cochran
Frank Antonucci	Danny Leone
Steven Ames	Richard Basehart
Samuel Berg	Ray Fry
Lionel Warner	Albert Popwell
Calliope Oliver	Violet J. Kennedy
George Uhorchak	Johnny Croce
Paula Tallaferro	Lorraine Pressler
Grace Umbdenstock	Janet Dowd
Gladys Steele	Frances Thaddeus
Elizabeth O'Hare	Peggy Wynne
Sophie Novak	Marjorie Milliard
Helen Orth	Celia Babcock
Lewis Rainey	Ross Matthew
Joe Pessolano	Debi Berti

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
May 9, 1944

Too Much and Yet Too Little

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

WHATEVER else may be wrong with it, the tail end of the theatrical season is for once not frivolous. Last week *Pick-Up Girl* made an earnest try at juvenile delin-

quency, and Monday night *Hickory Stick* grappled with a different side of the same problem. The scene this time is not a courtroom but a slum vocational school, and the story not a sober, retrospective case history of a wayward girl but the violent interplay of a number of students and teachers. Like *Pick-Up Girl*, *Hickory Stick* is deeply in earnest; like *Pick-Up Girl*—indeed, much more—it fails. But the reason for failure is very different. Where the tediously factual *Pick-Up Girl* got, as it were, beyond its length, the lurid *Hickory Stick* gets badly beyond its depth. Beginning as a social study of delinquency it turns midway into a personal study of evil. The tragic implications of the play move on two different levels, and though they are melodramatically woven together in terms of plot, they psychologically fly apart in terms of theme.

* * *

James Kirkland, a young teacher discharged from the Army after being wounded at Guadalcanal, comes to the school eager to wrestle with its problem kids. Seemingly the worst of them is the young brother of Kirkland's dead Army pal, and Kirkland quickly wins Tony over once he discloses who he is. But along with its hoodlums the school possesses a bitter, twisted youth who hates Kirkland and conspires like an adolescent Iago to set Tony against him. After that things move so fast and go so far that Tony is provoked into murdering his tormentor; and Kirkland, at the end, is left with the problem of getting Tony's unhappy story understood.

* * *

Beyond the crude melodrama, the awful stretching of probabilities and the overt moralizing, what is crucially wrong with *Hickory Stick* is that it ceases to deal with delinquency along normal lines, and turns into a very special sort of tragedy. The social problem that Kirkland sets himself to solve, the ordinary hoodlumism of the kids, is one thing; the behavior of the twisted boy is another. This is something so psychopathic, and deep-seated that it belongs in another kind of play—a play in the manner of *The Children's Hour*. By attempting both a problem drama and a psychological tragedy the authors have tried to get hold of both ends of the hickory stick and have managed to get hold of neither. The play has some interesting scenes but in their isolation they only emphasize its failure.

J. B. Daniels has done a pretty good job of directing, Steve Cochran is good as Kirkland, and Lawrence Fletcher is good as a hard-boiled teacher; while Vito Christi plays Tony well enough and Richard Basehart has effective moments as his tormentor.

NEW YORK SUN
May 9, 1944

'Hickory Stick' Sets Forth the Problems of Vocational High Schools

By HERRICK BROWN

PROBLEM youngsters are taking over the Broadway stage these May evenings. Last week "Pick-Up Girl" gave first-nighters a look at juvenile delinquency as viewed through a children's court. Last evening it was the tough kids in a vocational high school who were up for scrutiny as "Hickory Stick" by Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett had its premiere at the Mansfield Theater.

Mr. Burnett of the playwrighting team once taught in such a high school, and "Hickory Stick" has all the noise and the atmosphere of an institution dispensing education to a rowdy set of none too brilliant pupils, many of them castoffs from the academic high schools. However, as a play it has more shrillness and talk and horseplay than solid drama. That is a pity, too, for the authors' central idea is an excellent one.

Back to a trade high school, obviously somewhere in New York City, they bring Jim Kirkland from the beaches of Guadalcanal. There he had lived and fought beside boys barely out of schools such as the play's Truxton High, and his experience had convinced him that there was enough good stuff in hard-boiled youngsters to warrant the help of any teacher. When a Jap bullet ends his career as a soldier and returns him to teaching, he sets out to put his war-gained idealism into practice.

The problems he runs into prove almost too much for him, and they prove quite definitely too much for the harried playwrights. The result is a sprawling and frequently tedious hodgepodge of lofty talk, gun-toting melodrama, and rough-house comedy. "Hickory Street" engages in preaching one minute and dips into ribaldry for a laugh the next. The play reaches its best moment when the Guadalcanal veteran tells a jaded and cynical veteran of the vocational school wars what he plans to do. Nothing else in the play reaches that level in honesty or good theater again.

Steve Cochran gives a manly and convincing performance as the idealist home from the Pacific and Lawrence Fletcher is equally good as the cynic with a flair for non-academic quips. The class the latter conducts is a lot more entertaining for an audience incidentally, than that of the hero's. Vito Christi as a tough youngster who turns out to be the brother of a buddy the warrior-teacher had seen killed in the South Pacific makes the most of one of the plays larger roles, and Richard Basehart is properly morose and hysterical as Steven Ames, a misfit boy with a psychopathic hate of his parents. The women in the play have mainly a secondary role, but Adrienne Bayan gets more to do than the others as a pupil who loves Ames and gives a good performance.

J. B. Daniels, as director, has handled the classroom scenes well, but the ingredients for compact drama just aren't in the script. Frederick Fox's excellent settings afford a realistic schoolhouse background.

"Hickory Stick" demonstrates conclusively that life in a vocational high school is not much fun for a teacher. Unfortunately the play isn't much fun for a theater audience either.

NEW YORK POST
May 9, 1944

'Hickory Stick,' or Life Among the Thugs in a Vocational High School

By WILELLA WALDORF

"TOMORROW THE WORLD," which has been running for over a year at the Barrymore Theatre, has as its leading figure an insufferable young brat educated in modern Germany who comes to America to live with relatives. The play reminds audiences that there are millions of little fiends just like him in Naziland and that sooner or later, when the war is over, something will have to be done about them.

"Hickory Stick," which opened last night at the Mansfield Theatre, just across the street from the Barrymore, goes on in a Vocational High School located, presumably, in one of the tougher districts of New York City. It concerns not one, but dozens of teen-age thugs compared to whom the nasty little Nazi in "Tomorrow the World" seems a cross between Little Lord Fauntleroy and the hero of the Rollo Books.

The lesson "Hickory Stick" seeks to teach its audience is that we'd better not begin to reform Germany's school system until we have done something drastic about our own. The picture Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett paint of the institution they call Truxton Vocational High School may be greatly exaggerated. It certainly seems to be. But even if things aren't quite as bad as this in any one school, there is apparently plenty of room for something in the nature of a new approach.

The authors point out that Truxton gets the worst of a bad lot of students because the boys and girls are sent there only after they've been kicked out of two or three other high schools.

In order to hammer home their thesis, the Messrs. Stephani and Burnett introduce James Kirkland, a new teacher invalided out of the Army after a wound at Guadalcanal. A buck private, though formerly a university instructor, Kirkland grew interested in this particular school because one of his buddies, Frank Pessolano, came from there. Frank, killed in battle, has a younger brother in the school and an older brother wanted by the police.

Some of this is presented in a fairly obvious, sometimes clumsy, manner, but the riotous scenes in Kirkland's classroom carry a wallop that brings the play over the footlights much of the time even though it sometimes seems overdone and slightly silly.

Kirkland's efforts to get medical attention for an over-brilliant boy who is mentally sick meet with no success in the principal's office, and the curtain falls on a burst of melodrama more or less inevitable under the circumstances.

Steve Cochran, who looks a little like Clark Gable, does a straightforward job as the idealistic instructor, but the best written part is that of another more cynical teacher, who has no illusions about the mental, moral or physical attributes of his charges and whose language is graphically frank and illuminating on the subject. Lawrence Fletcher plays this part extremely well.

A really hair-raising gang of juvenile delinquents frequent the class-rooms at Truxton without apparently ever learning anything, and there is some good character work by Richard Basehart, Vito Christi, Ray Fry, and others we couldn't identify.

"Hickory Stick" may strike you as overdone. Some of it is a little too contrived and obvious and all of it will probably throw local school authorities into a terrible dither. But there's an idea there and the play has some surprisingly vigorous stuff in it. Although we didn't always believe it, we were seldom bored.

Apparently this is all part of a Spring Reform Wave sweeping over Broadway. Last week came "Pick-Up Girl," the courtroom record and case history of a fifteen year old girl who got into very bad company. Now "Hickory Stick" turns the spotlight on a group of incredible kids it asks you to believe are high school students. What is more, it often seems to know what it's talking about.

NEW YORK TIMES
May 9, 1944

'Hickory Stick,' a Study of a Vocational School, Opens at the Mansfield Theatre

By LEWIS NICHOLS

THE spring theatre is being governed by good intentions. To the list of those earlier plays deserving the phrase there now can be added "Hickory Stick," which opened last evening at the Mansfield. Unfortunately, it is not only the intention which counts on the streets near Times Square, and like a good many others the drama by Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett does not equal its high hopes. For, writing about life in a vocational school the collaborators have turned out a confused product, which leaves bits of plot lying about and which sometimes goes to melodrama and sometimes to plain, unhappy pathos. As an evening in the theatre, "Hickory Stick" is not a very good one.

* * *

There can be no disputing the good-will of the authors, however. Their Truxton Voca-

tional School is peopled by the misfits of the educational system, and the authors are all for giving them their chance. The teachers are cynical, the students are tough, the products of tough surroundings. Into this atmosphere of hatred and resentment comes a teacher discharged from the Army after being wounded. He starts to get along with the members of his class and then is tricked into beating one of the students and afterwards resigning. In their discussion, the Messrs. Stephani and Burnett have many things to say, and they do so with an obvious sincerity.

* * *

But where they get into trouble is with the plot and some of the characters. Not content with writing about an idealist who has left the Army to carry on the same sort of fight at home, they also give a portrait of a mentally ill student of almost complete viciousness. Not content with that, they drag in a love affair which adds nothing to the plot or the evening. One of their misfortunes is that the cynical teacher, who believes in the usages of the hickory stick as an aid to education, gets most of the brightest lines, and the idealist is left—as they would say at Truxton—something of a sap. The ending of the play is melodramatic and not very real.

* * *

Steve Cochran is the school teacher out of the Army, and Lawrence Fletcher the instructor who feels that the only way to give vocational education is by way of the first. Mr. Fletcher is very good in the third act, where he is being as tough as the students. Vito Christi is the student who reforms on finding his teacher had been with his brother in the South Pacific, and Richard Basehart has the part of the youngster with a hatred of his family, himself and his fellow man. Adrienne Bayan, Celia Babcock, Frances Thaddeus and a good many more are undergoing vocation training, and Adrienne Marden, Frieda Altman and Ross Matthew are some of their elders. J. B. Daniels directed, and Frederick Fox has designed a suitably drab school room.

"Hickory Stick" at least is trying, although it does not pass the examination.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
May 9, 1944

Hickory Stick Fails To Get Over Its Message

By BURTON RASCOE

WHEN one has credited Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett, the authors of Hickory Stick, which opened at the Mansfield last night with serious purpose and laudable intentions, I am afraid the verdict must be that their play is more than a shade short of being an effective medium for their messages. They are very anxious that certain reforms be instituted in the vocational guidance schools and their play purports to indicate where the trouble lies. But they are not very articulate about it, dramatically.

Throughout the first half of the play I kept thinking about a novel I read over 40 years ago called A Hoosier Schoolmaster, by Edward Eggleston; and throughout the second part of the play I kept thinking of the play, Dead End, and irrelevant matters. If Hickory Stick had been better I wouldn't have been thinking about the Eggleston novel or the Sidney Kingsley drama. My attention wouldn't have been wandering.

Not many people nowadays, I suppose, remember A Hoosier Schoolmaster, but it was still a popular classic in my boyhood. It is about a cultivated young Easterner who went to the wilds of Indiana with high ideals to teach in a country school where the tough and backward sons of frontiersmen were in the habit of rough-housing the schoolmaster until he fled in terror of ever maintaining any sort of discipline. Our hero (if I recall aright) whipped the toughest bully in a fair fight and thus won the respect, admiration and discipleship of the students.

Idealist Teacher

The hero of Hickory Stick is tough, too; but he has a different idea about how to win respect than that entertained by the Hoosier schoolmaster. There is already a teacher in the Truxton Vocational School (excellently played by Lawrence Fletcher), an ex-football star, who maintains respect by showing the kids he can be tougher than they are. But the hero (Steve Cochran) is back from the war, minus 12 feet of intestine from a bullet wound, and with an idea. He believes underprivileged youngsters can be taught honor and decency and that their energies can be channeled into productive endeavor. And he wants to achieve his aim not with the use of force or intimidation, but by the sympathetic approach of an intelligent appeal to their human instincts.

Eugene Walsh (Mr. Fletcher) has been through the mill as a teacher in the school and at first tries to dissuade James Kirkland (Mr. Cochran) from attempting to carry out his quixotic ideals. They will only bring him grief, he says; the better plan is think of the job as just a job, rule with an iron hand in class, and never take the work seriously, because (in his belief) the kids will work out their own destiny—some of them in the penitentiary or the electric chair, but some as solid citizens.

Stagey, Not Dramatic

Unfortunately for the argument which the authors obviously intended to make, the play works out as a vindication of Mr. Walsh's amiable cynicism and as a refutation of Kirkland's idealism. For, as a direct result of the application of Kirkland's theories, Kirkland's pet (Vito Christi) is provoked to kill a brilliant boy who has a mind so twisted that he wants to die. It is Walsh who emerges finally as the man of character and understanding, rather than Kirkland. For, although the authors contrive an ending in which Kirkland resolves to stay with the school, the fact remains that, at the first sign of failure, he had meekly resigned—the act of a weakling and an egocentric.

The play is contrived rather than felt, stagey rather than dramatic. There are 16 youngsters in the cast and all of them did their stints pretty well. Among the adults only Mr. Fletcher, Farrell Pelly and Ross Matthew seemed capable of transcending the limitations of their material.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
May 9, 1944

'Hickory Stick' Opens At the Mansfield

By ROBERT GARLAND

ONCE again the underprivileged youngsters of this Land of the Pilgrims' Pride are given a thorough going-over beneath the footlights, penetrating glare. Last week it was in Elsa Shelley's "Pick-Up Girl," which seems to be developing into a hit at the 48th Street Theatre. This week it is in "Hickory Stick," which the new producing firm of Ewing and Elkins fetched last night into the Mansfield.

Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett, co-authors of the newst on-stage viewer-with-alarm, certainly give the impression of knowing whereof they write. As is also the case one block to the north, the dialogic report of their investigations in juvenile delinquency is not a pleasant one.

Are these relentless young ruffians, these barbaric boys and girls to be inheritors of the bright new world for which husbands, sons and brothers are, even now, fighting and dying on land and sea and in the air? At first thought, it seems incredible. But, after listening to Elsa Shelley in "Pick-Up Girl" and Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett in "Hickory Stick," you're upset and apprehensive.

Drastic Doing

Where Miss Shelley's juvenile delinquents have their rough-and-unready hour within the four walls of a court room, the juvenile delinquents of the Messrs. Stephani and Burnett's "Hickory Stick" have theirs within the four walls of a vocational high school. To all visual and audible appearances, there's not a great deal of difference between the two. If anything, the high school youngsters are the more unworthy.

At the Truxton Vocational High School, the boys—the girls, also, for that matter—seldom use a six, seven or eight letter word when a four or five letter word will serve. And, although fine physical specimens for the most part, their morals, manners and mentalities manage to live down to their vocabularies.

For three arresting, if uneven acts, "Hickory Stick" sets out to show that these 'teen age enemies of society can—and should—be made safe for the Four Freedoms they, perhaps unwittingly, are predestined to inherit. But the making worthy of these unworthy ones, like the making-worthy of the unworthy ones of "Pick-Up Girl," is destined to take some drastic doing. You leave the Mansfield Theatre sadly, wondering how!

Can't Lump It

There's a story, as goes without saying. A story in which a sane and sympathetic teacher—the "Hickory Stick" counterpart of Judge Bentley of "Pick-Up Girl"—who is determined to make good women out of bad girls, better men out of worse boys. There're a touch of World War II, a dash of sere-and-mellow drama, and an ending which, while not what you might call happy, is hopeful.

And it's remarkably well played by a cast of practically unheard-of players. Among the high school faculty, Steve Cochran, as the optimistic Mr. Kirkland, is excellent. So are Lawrence Fletcher as the disillusioned Mr. Walsh and Adrienne Marden as the confused Miss Lorimer.

Among the high school youngsters—and they actually look like youngsters—I'd pick out Vito Christi as Tony Pessolano; Richard Basehart as Steven Ames; Bill Hunt as Peter Jastrombowski and the big fellow in the small sweater with the inspired New York accent. The settings are not up to Frederick Fox's standard, especially the office one . . . You may not like "Hickory Stick" as much as I do. But you just can't lump it!

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
May 9, 1944

'Hickory Stick' Good on Tough School Details, Bad on Drama

By JOHN CHAPMAN

WHEN "Hickory Stick" is describing the madhouse scene of a vocational high school in, perhaps, New York, it is exciting and shocking, for you feel that the authors know the life they are writing about and are presenting it truly. But when "Hickory Stick" is trying to be a play it loses its excitement in rather amateurish threatricality.

In a few more words, Frederick Stephani and Murray Burnett, the authors, have a lot of swell material which should have made a play, but they haven't known quite how to fashion it into dramatic form.

Sharply Observed Details.

Their human episodes—the pictures of teachers and kids, the fights and the frightening stupidities of problem pupils, the rough, bawdy humor of a gutter classroom—are sharply enough observed and ably enough recorded. But whenever they try to make their photographs move by injecting some plot the playwrights get unbelievably melodramatic. The first act is their best, neatly establishing characters and announcing a purpose; the second

is a disappointment, and the third falls apart.

The vocational high school of "Hickory Stick" is a dumping ground for kids either too dumb or too tough to handle in regular places of learning. The theory is that such pupils can be made useful in society by being taught manual trades.

One meets Mr. Walsh as a type of teacher —a cynic who goes through his classes, with cocked fists and no hope whatever of teaching anybody anything. All he wants is his $55 a week and time out for a drink.

One meets, also, Mr. Kirkland, a new teacher invalided from the war—a professor who got his on Guadalcanal. Kirkland has fought the war with dumb problem kids and they have been great soldiers—mixed-up, perhaps, but plenty good for fighting for their country. He has decided he will work among them and try to help them.

Good Start for a Play

This is an excellent start for a fine play, but only a start; and what follows is a dramatic jumble about a boy who is a problem because he reads Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, a tough Italian lad who turns hero-worshipper and the Italian boy's sister, a dumbly sexy wench who promotes books for the reader because she loves him. If the screwed-up young philosopher had just got his books from any free library there wouldn't have been any play, and then he wouldn't have had to commit suicide by making the Italian boy shoot him.

Performances are first-rate. Steve Cochran plays the idealistic war vet with modesty and conviction, and Lawrence Fletcher, as the cynic who punches instead of teaches, displays a good sense of timing for many really funny lines. Adrienne Bayan, as the love-nutty girl; Vito Christi, as her brother, and Richard Basehart, as the Schopenhauer screwball, are problem kids, all right. And J. B. Daniels has directed them and a flock of classmates in enough scuffling and yelling to make you think a vocational high school is hell itself.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
May 9, 1944

Schooldays, Schooldays

By HOWARD BARNES

A NEW melodrama about juvenile delinquency has sputtered into the Mansfield Theater. "Hickory Stick" skips the obvious theme of 'teen-age girls and sailors on the loose to contemplate cut-ups in a vocational school. It does so with such lack of skill and conviction as to suggest that the stage had better leave errant youngsters alone at the moment. This Frederick Stephani-Murray Burnett tract on intractable kids is hysterical, without ever becoming vaguely profound. Although it may attempt to recreate a realistic picture of problem boys and girls, it merely succeeds in making its subject matter ridiculous.

• • •

The authors of the piece have darted all over the place in their script. They plant an invalided soldier as the teacher of a particularly tough young gangster and then disclose that the former was a buddy of the lad's brother on Guadalcanal. Somewhere in the second act they suggest that the action is going to take in a taxi dance hall. When the going is really rough they plant a gun on the bad boy and let him blaze away at a precocious classmate, who appears to be only too willing to die. If there had been a fourth act it would undoubtedly have been set in the shadow of the electric chair.

• • •

Far be it from me to decry melodramatic exaggeration on the stage. Frequently it achieves an illuminating reflection of human experience. There is nothing faintly incandescent, though, about "Hickory Stick." The action is contrived and the dialogue would stop the "Dead End" kids in their tracks. The fact is that the work is a singularly bad play which has been afforded just enough in the way of a proficient production and performance to be pretentious. Since it has nothing of any value to state about vocational schools, it has neither meaning nor emotional excitement.

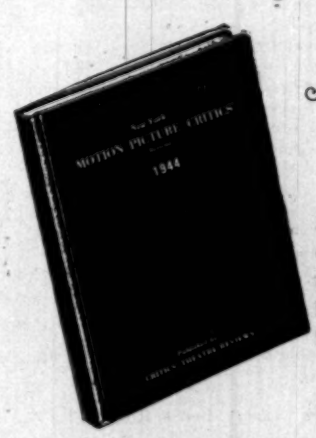
The players are generally asked to scream or cuff each other around. They are noisy and agile, but few of them give a sorry offering more than its due. Lawrence Fletcher is by far the best of the company. His portrayal of a cynical teacher in what amounts to a reform school, is taut and believable throughout. Richard Basehart is less successful as the torch bearer for juvenile delinquents and Vito Christi and Adrienne Bayan, as two of the students, get quite lost in the maze of the plot. There is probably a play to be written about vocational schools, but it has not seen the glow of footlights at the Mansfield.

You, too — Want to keep informed!

By referring to these reviews you will be able to learn instantly the cast, author, director, producer, picture running time, almost any other fact about current pictures. All in one convenient book.

New York Motion Picture Critics' Reviews

Indispensable to producers, casting directors, writers, exhibitors. Invaluable as a lasting record of the stars and their pictures.



All the information you need right at your finger-tips

Every week the COMPLETE criticisms exactly as they originally appeared in eight great New York newspapers will be sent you ready to be inserted in the beautiful 1944 blue cover.